

Spatial (a)symmetries across languages

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Workshop description

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The vast literature on motion events published in the past three decades has explored extensively typological differences between languages in (i) lexicalization patterns (e.g., satellite-framed vs. verb-framed) characterizing individual languages, (ii) the diversity of motion verb lexicon and the conceptual components of motion that languages make salient (namely path and manner), and (iii) the various (linguistic, pragmatic, and cognitive) factors influencing the attention that speakers of typologically varied languages allocated to path and manner of motion (e.g., Talmy, 1985, 2000; Slobin, 2004, 2006; Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2009; Verkerk, 2013, *inter alia*). However, the more we look into linguistic expressions of motion events, the more we uncover linguistic intricacies in this domain of expression. One such phenomenon which has recently gained interest in cross-linguistic studies relates to asymmetries in linguistic description of motion in space.

Earlier linguistic research has claimed that languages display a so-called Goal bias: as explained by Bourdin (1997: 190), “whatever particular aspect of the motion event they choose to focus on, languages do not appear to hold the balance equal between the specification of Source and that of Goal”. This Goal bias has been observed at different levels of the linguistic structure, morphosyntactic and semantic, as well as in discourse (e.g., Ikegami 1979, 1987; Bourdin 1997; Ungerer & Schmid, 1996; Verspoor *et al.*, 1999, *inter alia*). Thus, it has been shown that languages tend to use more complex expressions for Source, and simpler and more ‘straightforward’ expressions for Goal (e.g., ENG *climb down the tree* vs. *climb (up) the tree*). Languages also tend to make finer semantic distinctions in the expression of Goal than in the expression of Source, and elaborate Goal related information with a greater degree of granularity (e.g., FR *descendre du toit / du grenier* ‘come down from the roof / from the attic’ vs. *monter sur le toit / dans le grenier* ‘go up onto the roof / into the attic’). Furthermore, corpus-driven research has revealed that Goal of motion is more frequent in discourse as compared to Source of motion, thereby illustrating its pragmatic value (e.g., Stefanowitsch and Rohde, 2004; Verkerk, 2017). More recent studies have examined these tendencies from a cross-linguistic perspective, by investigating under-researched languages in this domain of expression. Although confirming that languages do tend to elaborate the Goal more frequently and more finely, these studies also show that the type and degree of the Source-Goal (a)symmetry may vary across languages depending on language-specific characteristics and the linguistic resources available for motion expression (see e.g., Kopecka and Vuillermet, 2021; Robbers, 2023).

While a number of previous studies have been concerned with variation in the expression of Source and Goal, spatial asymmetries have been also observed in the expression of Speed, one of the core components of Manner (*cf.*, Ikegami 1969, Slobin *et al.*, 2014; Stosic, 2019, 2020), and in the expression of Deictic orientation (*cf.*, Wilkins & Hill, 1995; Matsumoto, 2017). As a matter of fact, while relatively scarce in cross-linguistic studies, research on linguistic resources used to depict Slow and Fast motion suggests that Fast motion tends to be favoured in the linguistic expression as compared to Slow motion. For example, the study of speed adjectives in Russian shows that adjectives lexicalizing fast speed are more diverse than adjectives lexicalizing slow speed (Plungian

and Rakhilina, 2013). Likewise, a crosslinguistic research on adverbial expressions reveals that adverbs depicting fast motion are more frequent across languages than those used for slow motion (Hallonsten Halling, 2018), and a corpus-driven study of speed modifiers in Estonian shows that the adverbial expressions that convey fast speed are not only more frequent in discourse but also more diverse in terms of semantic distinctions and morphosyntactic realizations than those that convey slow speed (Taremaa and Kopecka, 2022a).

Spatial asymmetries are also reflected in the expression of deictic orientation of motion, i.e., *away from* or *towards* the deictic center. Whereas itive expressions such as *go* verbs tend to be more general semantically and, generally, more frequent in use than ventive expressions such as *come* verbs (e.g., Wilkins and Hill, 1995; Koga et al. 2008), a corpus-driven study in Japanese (Matsumoto, 2017, 2020) shows that in complex predicates conveying motion ventive verbs are more frequent than itive verbs, suggesting that in certain discourse-related contexts speakers may encode more readily motion oriented toward themselves than motion oriented away from them.

Data from different languages also suggests that there are subtle relations between Path (source- vs. goal-oriented), Manner (slow vs. fast motion), and/or Deixis (itive vs. ventive). For example, in French, when used with locative expressions (e.g., *dans* 'in', *sur* 'on'), verbs of fast motion (e.g., *courir* 'run', *sauter* 'jump') are more likely to express Goal-oriented events than verbs of slow motion (e.g., Kopecka, 2009; Aurnague 2015; Sarda, 2019). In Estonian, both verbs and modifiers of fast motion occur more frequently with Goal expressions, in contrast to verbs and modifiers of slow motion that tend to occur with trajectory and/or locative or direction expressions (Taremaa & Kopecka, 2022b). Besides, there are fine semantic affinities between some semantic components of Path and Manner. For example, in French, some verbs of motion (e.g., *s'échapper* 'escape', *détaler* 'flee') conflate fast motion and source-oriented Path whereas such connotations are uncommon for slow motion. Such semantic affinities can also be observed between Path and Deixis as, for example, in Standard Chinese where the source-oriented motion *-qi* 'up' can only combine with the ventive deictic *-lai* 'ventive' (e.g., *jiǎn-qi-lai* 'pick-up-ventive', *zhàn-qi-lai* 'stand-up-ventive'), (Lamarre, 2008).

The present workshop aims to investigate further these spatial asymmetries and to examine whether and how the expression of, for instance, slow vs. fast motion or itive vs. ventive orientation relate to source-goal asymmetry in terms of semantic congruence, combinatorial possibilities, and language use. Proposed topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- structural, semantic, and discursive manifestations of spatial asymmetries in the expression of motion events;
- the relation between Slow vs. Fast motion and Source-oriented vs. Goal-oriented motion in (i) the conflation of fine-grained semantic components of Path and Manner in verbs, and (ii) the semantic congruence and co-occurrences of Slow vs. Fast motion expressions and Source vs. Goal expressions;
- the relation between deictic expressions, itive (centrifugal) vs. ventive (centripetal) and Source-oriented vs. Goal-oriented motion in terms of combinations and language use;
- diachronic changes in motion verb lexicon and/or grammatical systems, specifically concerning the evolution of spatial (a)symmetries over time and their interaction with various semantic features linked to the description of space.

We invite papers that investigate both well described and less studied languages using different methods and data sources (e.g., field data, text and corpus-driven data; experimental and stimulus-based data), and including spoken and/or written modality.

Workshop convenors

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Call for papers

For the workshop proposal, we invite abstracts of 300 words max. (including examples but not references) that should be sent to the workshop organisers by **November 15, 2023**. If the workshop proposal is approved by the SLE Scientific Committee, authors will be asked to submit revised full 500-word abstracts to EasyChair for external evaluation by **January 15, 2024**.

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